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The Age of the Reformation. By PRESERVED SMITH. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1920.—xii, 861 pp.

One who would add another to the already long list of books on the Reformation and attempt to retell a story so often told already must needs approve himself as a thorough workman in the field and must be prepared to bring to the discussion new material or fresh viewpoint. The author meets the latter point by stating in his preface his conviction that the Reformation needs to be put "in its proper relations to the economic and intellectual revolution of the sixteenth century". It is here that his special contribution is to lie. Dr. Smith has for long been a close student of the period. By monograph and translation, dealing especially with Luther and his movement, he has taught us during the past dozen years to expect solid, thoughtful, scholarly work from his pen. A double guarantee of careful workmanship is given by its appearance as one of the volumes of the American Historical Series under the editorship of Professor Haskins.

Opening with a brief cross-sectional view of Europe at the beginning of the century, the writer plunges into the story of the causes of the religious revolt from Rome, taking up the course of that revolt country by country. Then follow very useful chapters on the social conditions of the time, and what is termed the "capitalistic revolution". In these the author spares us the now familiar theory that the revolt from Rome was a huge frameup of the rising commercial classes — the bourgeoisie — and monarchy to rob the nobles of their power and privilege and the Church of its wealth, arguing rather that both religious and economic changes, while closely interacting and frequently being made use of the one by the other, had their roots far back in the past and were the culmination of forces which would have come to the surface regardless of their synchronism.

Following two chapters in which the intellectual and cultural outlook of the period is summed up, is a final chapter, very useful and interesting for students of the period, in which the author analyzes the various interpretations of the Reformation by writers from the sixteenth century to our own day. These he groups under four main headings: (1) religious and political, (2) rationalist, (3) liberal romantic, and (4) economic and evolutionary. As Dr. Smith believes that historians are products of the times and "under the influence of their environment" (p. 703), these interpretations he finds correspond roughly to the sixteenth and seventeenth, the eighteenth,

the early nineteenth, and late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In order to fit things nicely into his scheme the author has to do some cutting and trimming. It is problematical, for example, if Professor Burr would recognize himself as the spiritual offspring of Nietzsche in his interpretation of the Reformation (p. 732).

There are appended sixty-six pages of bibliography listed by chapters, and under the chapters divided into sources and literature. One finds there an excellent guide to the materials of the subject, but it would seem that the arrangement of the titles might have been better. One feels that it is more useful for the scholar than for the general reader. There is an adequate index.

The book is written from an objective viewpoint; the writer studiously endeavors to view his material and record his findings in the spirit of the scientist rather than the partisan. This does not mean that we are treated to a colorless and dry narrative. Quite the contrary, it is replete with life and sparkle, and in the treatment of art the author forgets for a moment his usual reserve and gives looser rein to his enthusiasm. But while evidencing essential objectivity and fairness the writer is captivated by his century (*cf.* p. 694 *et seq.*). It was the period of highest appreciation of classical studies (p. 578); it was then that the modern state had its birth (p. 588); modern science had its beginnings (p. 609); and it is to this century that one must look for the true genesis of the economic changes that one has for long ascribed to a period some two centuries later. Nor does Dr. Smith leave one in doubt as to his philosophy of history. The world is improving. The words "medieval" and "scholastic" have a bad flavor (*cf.* pp. 668, 695); the religious revolution of the sixteenth century was a movement of progress (p. 750); the modern age, where the scientific point of view prevails, is a great advance over preceding centuries (*cf.* p. 637 *et seq.*).

From the reviewer's viewpoint complete justice is scarcely done those who remained true to the old Church. We are told, for example, that in England it was the progressive and intelligent groups that revolted from the Church, and one is left with the impression that they revolted because too intelligent to remain among the number of the faithful. But the men who by the author's own testimony saw most clearly—Erasmus, More, Montaigne—remained in the old faith. His chapter on the Catholic reformation is headed still "Counter Reformation", and while he points out that demands for reform within the Church were numerous and constant, it is

again difficult to escape the impression in reading the account that reform was merely a defensive weapon and that the Church went no farther than the exigencies of the Protestant revolt forced it to go. But is it not true that men who remained within the Church, representing both the temporal and spiritual estates, yielded not a whit in earnestness and reforming zeal to those who broke away?

Dr. Smith leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that he finds Luther the most vibrant and interesting character among the Protestant leaders. To him is ascribed, very justly, more influence upon the Reformation in England, France and Switzerland than has generally been conceded. But while Luther may be his hero, the author seems to feel keen admiration for the more somber qualities of the Puritan type, with its "lofty seriousness" (p. 167). The Huguenot was of the finest type of French manhood (p. 208); in the Netherlands Calvinism with its "moral and religious" appeal, attracted the "more substantial progressive, and intelligent part of the community" (p. 248); in Scotland the decision was made not "by counting heads but by weighing character" (p. 363); while the service of English Puritanism was "to bring the genius of the Bible into English life and literature, to impress each man with the idea of living for duty, to reduce politics and the whole life of the state to ethical standards" (p. 345).

The chapters on social and economic conditions in the sixteenth century furnish in their setting a distinct contribution. The great increase in wealth and its effect in fostering the development of a moneyed class seeking power and privilege is clearly outlined, and while the author commiserates the lot of the peasant and artisan he feels that such amassing of wealth in the hands of a few was necessary for the exploitation of the world's resources and the great increase in culture and comfort consequent thereto. "Capitalism supplanted guild-production because of its fitness as a social instrument for the production and storing of wealth. . . . And this is an inestimable service to any society" (p. 515 *et seq.*).

In a book the size of the one under review expressions will occur upon which there may be some difference of opinion. For example, the terms "sale of indulgences" and "worship of the saints", while common enough in Protestant writings, seem to the reviewer unhappy and unfair. There is a lack of precision in the use of the words "tolerance" and "toleration". Thus in the author's phrase Henry IV was responsible for the "adoption of tolerance" (p. 225; *cf.* p. 650 for a like use of the word). The correct word would seem to

be toleration, a policy which may or may not be accompanied by the spirit of tolerance. And the section in which is treated the important subject of tolerance and intolerance (pp. 641-651) seems superficial. The author has nowhere explained the underlying motives of religious persecution. In tolerance and intolerance two rival philosophies come into play, relativity versus absolutism, and, for one who retains the latter, tolerance can only mean indifference. And it is these two concepts that seem to be confused in the author's mind. In the judgment of the reviewer adequate treatment is not accorded those groups in the Reformation who refused to subscribe to any one of the dominant creeds. The "Anabaptists" are dismissed with only occasional references, and yet these "ultras of the Reformation" had, by the testimony of some modern students, an influence for the later age quite out of proportion to their numbers and significance at the time. Certainly Denck's assertion that he cared not what creed a man professed so long as he honestly attempted to follow the precepts of the Master, has much in common with the thought of large groups of today.

In the details of proofreading the author leaves but little to be desired. The slips are few and unimportant—one's eye catches "principal" for principle (p. 391); "mortage" for mortgage (p. 411); in the manorial system the word "glebe" has a technical meaning and its use as on page 547 is unfortunate; "Montesquieu" is probably written for Voltaire (p. 708); the rubrics at the side of the page are not always in alignment with the matter to which they refer, as on page 650 the dates 1592 and 1598.

Such criticisms as have here been made are rather on matters of interpretation, wherein the author is entitled to his own opinion, than questioning of the facts presented. The book is balanced, orderly, well written, and the author performs a real service in calling a halt to the flood of cheap and easy interpretations of the religious and social changes of the sixteenth century and insisting, especially in his last chapter, upon the inadequacy of any single or simple explanation of either the causes or the significance of the Reformation.

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